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ABSTRACT

This booklet, which was written for literacy educators in Australia, examines selected research on adult literacy practices in rural families and communities and the implications of that research for adult literacy practice. The booklet begins with a discussion of literacy as social practice. The role of case studies in identifying factors constructing adult literacy practices is explored along with differences between the literacy practices in individual rural communities that are linked to location, social issues, economics, and history. The importance of considering literacy not just as cognitive activity but also as a social practice related to learners' habitats is emphasized. It is suggested that stakeholders interested in developing or improving adult and family literacy in specific rural communities begin by mapping the literacy practices in the community so as to establish a basis for reconceptualizing literacy as literacies arising from social practice and provide documentation of language use in the community. Concluding the booklet are a discussion of creating a responsive curriculum using Australia' s National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence and a table detailing the framework's aspects and stages as applied to a specific rural community. The booklet contains 22 references. (MN)

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ADULT LITERACY PRACTICES IN RURAL FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

by Geoff Bull and Michèle Anstey

ADULT LITERACY RESEARCH NETWORK

number 1

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ADULT LITERACY PRACTICES IN RURAL FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Introduction

This monograph is based on the premise that literacy is more profitably viewed as a social practice as well as a set of cognitive skills. The first section of the monograph provides a theoretical rationale for the research reported. Following this section, the factors which construct adult literacy practices in rural communities will be outlined. In the final section the implications of these findings for those involved with adult literacy will be discussed.

Background: Literacy as Social Practice

Historically, literacy has been seen as a purely cognitive process consisting of a unitary set of skills. It was believed that the development of these skills was strongly associated with personal and cognitive development and relied upon a set of internal mental processes. These theories, based on the work of researchers such as Smith and Goodman, were popular in the 1970's and 1980's. (For a review of these theories see Stanovich, 1991). This 'psychologising' of literacy constructed literacy as highly individualistic, invisible and independent of context. Such definitions of literacy led to a 'blame the victim' mentality, where those who were not deemed successful, were constructed as deficient.

Alternatively, literacy can be seen as emerging from social practices in which individuals are engaged. These practices derive from participation in a wide range of cultural groups, each with its own set of literacy practices. As Heath (1983 : 11) has suggested:

> *The place of language in the cultural life of each social group is interdependent with the habits and values of behaving, shared among members of that group.*

This sociocultural definition of literacy is more practical in that it focuses on the visible aspects of literacy and how they are manifested in various contexts.

> *The word **literacy** then, suggests state of being and a set of capabilities through which the literate individual is able to utilise the **interior world of self to act upon and interact with the exterior structures of the world** around him in order to make sense of self and other. (Courts, 1991: 4)*

Literacy therefore, means reading the world as well as reading the word (Freire 1987). The way in which an individual reads the world is the result of enculturation into the particular context one lives. This begins in early childhood and gives rise to particular behaviours in particular contexts. These behaviours are not always calculated or conscious, but the result of the individual's experiences and engagement with the sociocultural and literate practices of their family and community. Bourdieu (1993), describes this phenomenon as an individual's habitus. Others have described it as an individual's 'feel for the game': their practical cultural knowledge which causes them to behave and react in particular ways (Johnson in Bourdieu 1993 : 5).

Therefore, a purely psychological definition of literacy becomes very limiting as it fails to take account of cultural and social factors when analysing literacy practices.

> *In other words, they [traditional approaches to literacy] ignore the way language may either confirm or deny the life histories and experiences of the people who use it. (Macedo in Courts, 1991: ix - x)*

Consequently, the diversity and dynamism of literacy practices can be accounted for not so much by recourse to individual differences or deficits but in relation to habitus and sociocultural contexts. Different literacy practices arise from the range of contexts in which individuals participate. Each context requires different ways of behaving and interacting in both oral and written modes. The concept of Discourses (distinguished by a capital D) has evolved to describe these *behaviours and literacies* associated with different contexts, as against "small d" discourses which refer to language only). Gee (1990 : xix - xx) has suggested that:

> *Each of us is a member of many Discourses, and each Discourse represents one of our ever multiple identities... Each Discourse incorporates a usually taken-for-granted and tacit 'theory' of*

what counts as a 'normal' person and the 'right' ways to think, feel and behave.

Using Gee's concept, each adult may move through and participate in a number of Discourses in a day (primary or secondary), each of which has its commonly accepted ways of behaving, talking, reading, writing, dressing, etc. For example, a person may be a businesswoman, grandmother, tennis player and church elder; or Rotarian, businessman, pool player and stock car driver. (Gee 1992,108-109).

The discussion so far accounts for some of the variations in literacy practices, but does not touch (because of reasons of space) on other complexities such as which literacies are most valued, which Discourses are valorised, and which pedagogies and texts are foregrounded in educational settings. Questions related to the valuing of literacies, the acceptance of Discourses, and the selection of pedagogies and texts, naturally lead to questions about *who* chooses to value them and *why*. Such questions are to do with the maintenance of power structures within society, as inevitably the acceptance of particular literacy practices, includes and excludes specific groups within society. These issues can be pursued in the writings of Luke in Unsworth 1993, Lankshear and McLaren 1993, and Courts 1991.

Traditional psychological pedagogies of the past sometimes resulted in adults, constructed as illiterate, being held to account for their lack of ability in literacy. It would seem that viewing literacy as social practice is a more proactive response to adult literacy education. Sociocultural pedagogies examine the literacy contexts and Discourses of the adult illiterate's life and tailor programs that begin on common ground. In contemporary society, which has gone beyond technological to informational because of its 'fast capitalist ' nature (see Gee, 1994), high levels of participation and interaction are needed to achieve this common ground. Sociocultural views of literacy, which foreground practice, are more useful in attaining common ground than psychological views where literacy practices remain individualised, cognitive, and therefore invisible.

In summary, the following assumptions about literacy can be made and have been used to guide and inform the research reported in this monograph:

> Literacy is an everyday social practice in which individuals participate at home, in community (civic, bureaucratic and commercial), workplace, and through mass media and religion.

> Literacy is not a neutral practice but relates to how individuals read the world, that is, how they think, value and interpret the world through various Discourses.
>
> Literacy is a political enterprise. The valuing of particular literacy practices not only constructs the way an individual can operate in the world but also the way different cultural groups and agencies are structured and operationalised.

The pedagogy of literacy empowers and disempowers particular sociocultural groups. The selection of literate texts and ways of engaging with those texts are made by those who use and value the dominant Discourses. Therefore, particular individuals or groups can be advantaged or disadvantaged by the texts and pedagogies selected.

Factors Constructing Adult Literacy Practices: Case Studies

A critical feature emerging from the research which has informed this monograph, is that there is no *one* set of adult literacy practices common to all rural communities. As the concept of literacy as social practice suggests, many *different literacies* are potentially available in each community and from these, because of a range of contextual factors, particular practices are foregrounded. In this section, the range of contextual factors and the ways in which they construct literacy practices distinctively in different communities will be demonstrated through a series of case study exemplars.

Location and Population

The location of a community can be described in a number of ways; the distance from a state capital or a major town, its proximity to major highways and tourist destinations and the availability of transport services such as air, bus and rail routes. Rural centres which are on major highways or are well serviced by bus and railway routes are constantly exposed to and interacting with a variety of people. This interaction is magnified if the community is a tourist destination in itself or enroute to a major attraction. Interaction with the variety of people passing through, exposes the community to a wider range of literacy

practices and literacies. Different social and cultural situations and interactions emerge from the interaction between the community and visitors.

There are many dimensions to the concept of population in a community which effect the literacy practices including overall size of the population, the spread of ages across the population and the number of ethnic or cultural groups within the population. In addition to these, the extent of change in population of the community is an important factor. For example a population may be static and unchanging; static in terms of overall numbers, but changing as people come and go: increasing, or declining.

The fall or rise in population can effect the number of literacy practices and can also effect the diversity of literacy practices. A growing population can introduce new groups to the community (for example professionals, alternative life stylers, religious groups), and therefore offer a wider range of literacy practices; while decline can have the opposite effect. Similarly, a community which does not have a 'normal' distribution of age groups, can have an unusual range of literacy practices. For example, if for economic reasons young people go away to work and the elderly stay on for retirement, there are some gaps in the range of literacy practices that will be more prevalent than in a community with a 'normal' age distribution. If there are missing age groups in the population there may be fewer literacy models available to the young in the community.

The diversity and difference of literacy practices can also be effected by the presence or absence of particular language groups. In a relatively static or conservative community, language practices can be used to maintain the status quo, whereas in dynamic communities, literacy practices can be used powerfully to inform and change the community. In addition to this, Indigenous language users or foreign language users can provide a whole range of different social and cultural sites where particular literacy practices can be fostered.

The contribution of location and population factors to the literate community were popularised by Heath in her study of rural families. As she suggested (Heath, 1983:11):

> *... different social legacies and ways of behaving can also be found between villages or communities located only a few miles apart .*

Accordingly, location and population features contribute powerfully to the way in which literacy practices characterise the community.

Historic and Economic Features: Contrasting case studies.

The history of a community (both social and economic), together with its current situation, gives rise to particular literacy practices; influencing the attitude, beliefs and perceptions about literacy, its definition, utility and power. As Heath (1983:10) has stated:

> *The various approaches of these communities to acquiring, using, and valuing language are the products of their history and current situation.*

In order to exemplify this, there follows case studies of two contrasting communities followed by a discussion of the literacy practices in these communities.

The first community has a history of prosperity due to two major sources of income in the community: grazing and the local council. As indicated by Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data, this community has a normal employment profile for the present conditions in Australia; there is not a large unemployed population but neither is there full employment. There are few small businesses in the town, only one or two shops, a newsagent and hotel (all family owned and run). Other businesses are associated with the agriculture of the community; in particular a trucking company and earthmoving company, both family owned. Therefore, there are two main sources of employment, the council or the properties surrounding the town. There is no managerial type employment and the only professionals are itinerant bank managers, nurses, doctor and teachers.

Because of the nature of the two major employers in the community (council, in town; and properties, out of town), there is some division in the community. The out of town section of the community is associated with an elitism of both economic and social dimensions attached to property ownership. This division is quite real, as even in times of economic downturn and drought, ABS statistics indicate there is a disjunction of income between the two groups.

This is largely accounted for by the disappearance of the managerial and labouring workforce on the properties. Each group has its own sites for recreation; 'out of towners' use the golf club and 'in towners' use the pub. There is some suspicion and hostility because of this that is most often manifested at educational sites (kindy, pre-school and the local state school) where the out of town group is accused of running the school, largely because this group participates more and, due to their literacy skills, are often office-bearers. The out of town group has power in terms of money and status due to their access to and use of a greater range of literacy skills.

Recently this community suffered economic downturn. Graziers can no longer afford to employ people to manage or work their land, the council is down-sizing, the population is dwindling and there are no newcomers to the community. Because of the small size of the community and its isolation, there have been no regional government services from which small businesses could have developed.

Drawing upon a newspaper search of the history of this community since the 1950's, and oral reports from elderly members of the community, it becomes apparent that this is the first time in recent history this town has had an economic or social crisis. It has no history to draw upon for assistance, and because it has been isolated in terms of changes to population or industry, it has limited literacies to deal with it. This community has never had to use literacy to problem solve, only for utilitarian purposes. It does not know how to research ways to assist the town to change, nor which bodies they should approach for assistance. The community has never used literacy to apply for grants or seek consultation etc. Therefore the community is having considerable difficulty dealing with change as change has not previously been a contributing element to the social and economic profile of the community.

Learning to deal with change is an important part of literacy learning, when literacy is defined as social practice. As Lemke (1994:37) stated:

> *By living we change the world we live in. Our world, and the meanings it has for us, change constantly. The ways we live literacy contribute to these changes, making literacy itself, the system of literate practices of our lives together, change and develop like a living thing. Living literacy is literacy continuously*

> *adapting to social and cultural change, continuously contributing to the ways we remake our world.*

In contrast, a community in which change is part of the social fabric, the literacy practices are more diverse and dynamic and the community is better equipped to cope with adversity. This is the case with the second community, which has had a history of boom and bust but remains optimistic and self determining. This community has had a series of major industries which have come and gone and also a history of change in terms of population. The population, whilst remaining static in terms of numbers, has changed in terms of its structure. People have chosen to live in the community and, as a result, there are a variety of social and cultural groups, from alternate lifestylers to professionals who have dropped out, to groups setting up niche industries in craft, hospitality, tourism, and farming. The result of this social and cultural diversity is the presence of a range of Discourses which are accessible to all members of this community. Everyday dealing with a multiplicity of literacies in a variety of settings is a feature of *living literacy* for this population.

Consequently, in contrast to the first community described, the second community as a whole deals with change proactively and has a range of literacies, practices, and knowledge about the uses of literacy, to assist it in dealing with change. Thus, change and language use are clearly interconnected, one informing the other. The economic, historical and social profile of a community, together with its population and location, provide access to literacy practices which generate ways of dealing with diversity and difference. As Heath (1983:11) has stated:

> *... respective histories, patterns of face-to-face interactions, and ways of adjusting both to the external environment and to individuals within and outside their groups have shaped their different patterns of using language.*

It becomes apparent from the preceding discussion that when dealing with literacy and literacy education, much can be learned from examining the whole community (location, population, social and economic history), rather than simply the individual's home background.

How Views of Literacy are Constructed

The factors discussed in the preceding two sections indicate *differences* in literacy practices between rural communities linked to location, social issues, economics and history. However there are *points of congruence* between the rural communities, such as how rural people construct literacy.

Rural communities suffer the same inequities as urban communities (for example, unequal distribution of income, vested interests and access to power). They can also have the same range of definitions of literacy as urban communities and these can be as diverse and sophisticated as their metropolitan counterparts. One of these definitions of literacy is the "high culture" view of literacy, often associated with elite (social and economic) groups in the communities. In this construction, literacy is seen in more *traditional* terms, that is, related to reading and writing rather than viewing and speaking. The high culture construction of literacy is not widespread in practice; more prevalent is the reading and viewing of the *popular culture* of media texts, popular fiction, video and magazines. Therefore any attempt to deal with adult literacy practices in a meaningful way, must take note of the popular culture of a community (Luke, in press) and not simply foreground the traditional view.

Another area of congruence in the rural communities studied was the gendered construction of literacy practice. Analyses revealed a positive relationship between the level of education of the female parent and the literacy practices of the family. It became apparent from these data, and other observations of literacy practice in the communities, that *literacy is 'women's work'* and those more likely to be interested in literacy and literacy education would be women. In fact, women were more likely to be involved in literacy and a greater variety of literacy practices and saw it as having power and potential to create opportunity and bring about change. When literacy was used in broader cultural contexts, such as in creating employment opportunities or attracting grants and support services, it was the women who successfully engaged in these literacy practices. Conversely, men generally saw literacy in more functional terms in order to complete tasks or augment work. Although women saw literacy as *potentially powerful* and were generally more literate than their male counterparts, they did not *gain power* or *status* in their community

through their literacy practices. An added dimension was that in the dynamic community, although the women themselves still did not gain power through their literacy practices, in many cases their practices were used powerfully and successfully; that is they brought about change for the community.

Implications for Adult Literacy Pedagogy

The preceding sections of this monograph have highlighted the complexity of literacy and literacy practices. It has been demonstrated that literacy should be considered, not only as a cognitive activity but also as a social practice and that one's literacy practices are related to one's habitus; the Discourses one has access to and engages in. Literacy pedagogies and educational institutions have not kept pace with this evolving definition of literacy as both a cognitive and social practice. As Lemke (1994: 47) stated:

> *The great challenge for literacy education today is diversity...Most of us have been educated in curricula traditions which assume that these differences were small compared to the underlying similarities and that just by going to a slightly higher level of abstraction we could encompass this diversity and prepare students for any possible use of literacy.*

The data presented in this monograph further reinforces this view of Lemke's that community literacies are diverse but school literacy is not. Barratt-Pugh, Rivalland and Rohl, (1994 : 112), drawing upon research in Western Australia, also comment on this stating:

> *School literacy practices appear to be relatively common across rural and urban communities and do not reflect the diversity of practices evident in the homes.*

Educators, as Lemke suggests, need to impose less and offer more. They need to be more familiar with the literacy practices of their students and communities and how these practices are modified by the social and economic histories of the communities. Part of this 'offering more' is to make literacy learning context-specific and needs-based. Literacy learning by adults is more likely to succeed when it is less like school practices and more like the practices that occur everyday in the community. Mikulecky (in Radencich 1994, a

compendium of articles in adult literacy over the last ten years), suggests many adult literacy educators have called for the achievement of social and economic equality through the introduction of emancipatory and liberatory programs. Many of these articles call for change to current adult literacy practices. Adult literacy educators therefore need to understand more about how their communities work and rely less on traditional school based literacy pedagogies. As Lankshear and Lawler (1987:10) stated:

> *... we may contrast the example of informal, voluntary adult literacy learning, where pupil and teacher work out together the sorts of skills and content that will be undertaken (for example, 'just enough so I can sit my drivers licence'), with the typical school learning experience, wherein skills and content are officially and, as far as the pupils are concerned, impersonally defined.*

In the group of adults interviewed in the studies reported in this monograph, it became apparent that even though many of them had not performed well in traditional school based literacy practices they were performing most successfully in community literacy practices. This is not to underplay the importance of school based literacy pedagogy but rather to imply that such pedagogies should not be transferred to different contexts and groups (eg: adult literacy classes) without consideration of the literacies needed and practised by such groups. School pedagogies have great potential to support the adult literacy learning context, but perhaps need to learn to 'read' their communities better.

As Freebody (1994: 23) has stated:

> *Institutions, through the production, distribution, exchange and maintenance of certain literacy practices, have as much potential to maintain and entrench patterns of inequality as they do to resist and challenge them.*

Reading the Community

A possible way forward is for all stakeholders in the community to co-operate in the mapping of the literacy practices in their communities. Such a mapping would identify the literacy sites in the community (home, civic, bureaucratic, commercial, mass media and religious) and attempt to identify the Discourses predominant in such sites. Historical social and economic features need to be identified and the relationship between these features and the literacy practices and Discourses of the community explored.

Possible steps in mapping a community

1. Obtain the ABS statistics to see how the community is structured. eg missing generations, employment (types of and unemployment figures), income distribution.

2. Make an inventory of all the clubs, groups, recreation activities and religious groups as possible sites in which different literacies might be practiced.

3. Having identified the potential sites, find ways of entering some of them (eg: workplaces, groups etc) and identify some of the dominant literacies practiced. Entry to these sites may come through the adult literacy students themselves or employers who are clients.

4. Where possible, involve the adult literacy students in the mapping exercise.

5. Do a search through old issues of the local paper, contact the local historical society, or talk to older members of the community and attempt to identify what historical and economic forces have been at work in the community. Consider how this history may have foregrounded particular literacy practices.

6. Consider the physical location and geography of the community. Relate this to past times but also to the development of particular enterprises and recreational activity; which in turn influence the range of literacy practices in the community.

These mapping activities provide the basis for reconceptualising *literacy as literacies which arise from social practice*. They also provide documentation of language in use in the community.

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CREATING A RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM USING THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

In presenting their research, Geoff Bull and Michelle Anstey have highlighted some important points for us as practitioners to consider. They present a socio-cultural view of literacy as a valuable lens through which practitioners could view firstly, their own practice, and secondly, the notion of literacy as social practice. In the light of these issues, it is worth considering how a curriculum could be created to respond to the identified needs of individuals and communities. We take one curriculum suggestion "Reading the Community" and the first of the case studies to show how teaching/learning activities could be developed within the National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence.

The first issue for reflection, is that "literacy is not neutral but relates to how individuals read the world" (p4). How often do we take time, or make time, to actually reflect on where we are coming from, our own beliefs, attitudes and values, and how these impact on the way we teach or facilitate learning? How does all of this affect our attitudes towards our students (who may not share our values), the texts we or our students choose to read, and the ways in which they are read? Whose experiences are made relevant when reading or listening to these texts? Are students being positioned as passive recipients of information or do we provide opportunities and techniques for students to resist or challenge the views being presented?

You may think, that's all very well but I have to follow a curriculum, I don't have the flexibility I used to have. But these are crucial issues which should underpin all our practice. In the final section we present suggestions about how this could be done within the National Framework.

A second issue, which is reinforced by this research, is the notion of multiple literacies. For some time now, we have been aware of the highly contextualised nature of language, and since reports such as *No Single Measure* (Wickers, 1989) we have questioned the unitary nature of literacy. However this research demonstrates the great range of contextual factors impacting on literate practices. What we may not have previously considered are how historical, demographic, economic, technological and socio-cultural factors affect literate practices within communities. Teachers often need to have patience and

persistance when coping with what appear to be conservative community values, especially with issues of social justice. Teachers are often considered to be 'outsiders' and, unless the program has been generated from within the community, they are destined to remain so for a long time. Further, despite technological advances, rural practitioners often lack the same level of professional support available to those in the city. From the student perspective, a real issue in small communities is that of confidentiality and it has been reported that students will travel several hundred kilometres to attend a program in a different community to avoid identification. Another issue which has recently been raised is that of retrenched workers and long-term youth unemployment. Despite the number of Newstart programs, employment is just not available in drough devastated areas and relocation to the city is costly.

Educational policy makers do not appear to recognise the complexity of these issues and increasingly we are being asked to conform to curriculum written in competency terms. But this does not have to constrin the curriculum or the teaching strategies used.

In an attempt to take the initiative and be proactive in dealing with the complexities of multiple literacies and cultural values, practitioners were very much involved with the development of the National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence. The framework seeks to include a range of literate practices as **aspects** of competence as well as **stages** of competence, which recognise that at any time an individual may seek assistance with one task whilst working independently on another. The Framework also recognises that some forms of engagement are more valued in some cultures.

In this final section, we have drawn sample adult literacy teaching/learning activities from a context similar to the first community described in the previous paper as suffering a recent economic downturn, and placed them within the National Framework (Table1). These teaching/learning activites predispose certain literacy practices and we acknowledge Freebody (quoted by Bull and Anstey, p.11) who states:

> *...certain literacy practices have as much potential to maintain and entrench patterns of inequality as they do to resist and challenge them.*

The valuing of certain discourses is at the very core of the notion of education success for members of some groups, indeed it is often the student's perception of 'failure' as measured in those terms which bring them to literacy classes. Adult lilteracy practitioners are well aware of the societal pressures on students but it is through detailed research into actual literate practices that we can critically examine our own values and teaching practice.

A table featuring both the Apects and Stages of the National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence with application of the first rural community from Bull and Anstey's case studies as a teaching/ learning context

Aspects	Stages	Using rural community contexts	Rural community texts and resources
Performing tasks	Assisted competence	gather information about employment changes in rural community, make oral reports to group, and write a group report of findings	Council publications of infrastructure planning
	Independent competence	individual report writing about aspects of change, especially taking alternative perspectives from their own.	Administrative documents especially those concerned with political action, and lobbying for funds or programs.
	Collaborative competence	make recommendations to both group members, council, state and federal government agencies to implement assistance schemes.	The Land newpaper (or similar) for change in the economic viability of grazing. Listening to the 'Rural Hour' on ABC radio to further understand market prices of product etc.
Using technology	Assisted competence	request assistance in using local library catalogues or interlibrary loan facilities, group tape record and play back interviews with local people, using a word processor, make phone calls to government agencies.	local newpapers, government policies, local clubs and meeting place eg CWA, the golf club and the pub.

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Aspects	Stages	Using rural community contexts	Rural community texts and resources
	Independent competence	reflect on own experiences using technology during employment and unemployment, and the use of technology while compiling reports.	Australian Bureau of Statistics publications and on-line databases (if available)
	Collaborative competence	groups access database materials especially statistical data whch can be used in the recommendation.	
Expressing identity	Assisted competence	each learner compiles a personal history especially noting those times when aspects of their communities condition influenced their own.	
	Independent competence	each learner compiles an economic time line of their life.	old issues of the local newspaper.
	Collaborative competence	a group task of developing a community economic timeline and then plotting individual's experiences upon that line.	historical publications which outline the reasons a town developing in this location.
Interacting in groups	Assisted competence	groups of learners coming together in order to find commonalities or differences, through discussion in their perceptions of the economy of their district, these could be noted and added to report writing activity.	experiences of local families and clubs, groups, recreation activities, and religious groups.
	Independent competence	each learner prepares a group discussion topic within the theme, where all members need to play the role of someone other than themselves, this will need a great deal of reflection about the community and its problems.	telephone book with names of local business, professionals and agencies.

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Aspects	Stages	Using rural community contexts	Rural community texts and resources
	Collaborative competence	the group discusses and decides which of these discussion topics, should be carried out and will lead to the writing of a better report.	
Interacting with the wider community	Assisted competence	write press releases based on group findings	newpapers both local and State wide in order to consider both readership and style for letters.
	Independent competence	write letters to the editor of the local paper with locality specific details.	
	Collaborative competence	groups write letters to State of National editors with more generic details about unemployment and rural economic downturn.	

Adapted from National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence ACTRAC, 1994

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The publication of the Research into Practice Series is one strategy to implement the dissemination of research. The aim is to provide a series of booklets on different aspects of adult literacy in order to:

- *establish a knowledge base regarding adult literacy practice and research*
- *raise awareness about adult literacy*
- *bring research and practice together*

The authors of the booklets, who are recognised experts in their field, were invited to write for an audience of literacy practitioners in the community, TAFE, university, ACTU, industry and private providers. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Language Australia.

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